

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 5



HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT CAME TO US

Scripture Texts: Colossians 4:16; 2 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:12-15

The New Testament was written in Greek. For people of other tongues to read it, it had to be translated into their languages. Some languages possess many versions, and more than twelve hundred languages possess at least part of the Bible. Still others have none of it.

God gave the Bible. He desires all men to hear it, commanded that it be preached in all the world, and plants in the hearts of the saints a desire to tell it. He says it will never be destroyed but will accomplish the purpose for which it is sent. He exhorts us to search the Scriptures and to have His Words abiding in us. He has used His Word to bless and save millions. He will not allow it to be brought to an end. He is watching to guard against its destruction or corruption. We must do the same.

The New Testament is to stand forever and is to be passed on to all people for their salvation and spiritual nurture.

MEMORY VERSE: *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.—2 Timothy 2:2*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**John 7:37-46** Jesus cries His invitation to all.

Tue.—**John 21:15-22** Christ's sheep must be fed.

Wed.—**Acts 4:1-22** Apostles' passion for telling the news.

Thu.—**1 Corinthians 9:16-27** Paul's passion to preach Gospel.

Fri.—**Psalm 119:49-64** David's trust in God's Word.

Devotional Reading: 2 Timothy 2:1-10 Word is to be passed on.

Congregations Shared the Epistles

Colossians 4:16 Paul wrote this letter from his prison cell to the church at Colosse (**Colossians 4:18**). He tells them to **cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans**. Also, **ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea**. (Not written from there, but brought from there for reading.) Churches copied and kept the precious letters. They were written to be shared.

2 Peter 1:1 Peter wrote to the church in general—to **them that have obtained like precious faith**. Other books are addressed to saints generally: **James—to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad; 1 Peter—to the strangers scattered throughout** named areas; **Jude—to them that are sanctified**. **Hebrews 3:1—Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling**. Christ gave **The Revelation to shew unto his servants . . . 1 Corinthians—with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ; 2 Corinthians—with all the saints which are in all Achaia; Ephesians—and to the faithful in Christ Jesus**. Three of the Gospels were recorded unaddressed for whosoever will to read. These show God's constant purpose to send His Word to all mankind. He puts His power behind its preservation and spread.

Plans for Preserving the Scriptures

2 Peter 1:12-15 Peter intended to put the church **in remembrance** of the need of diligent obedience to Christ. He did so even though the saints knew this and were **established in the present truth**—the level of truth given men in this present dispensation. He knew, from his own experience, how easy it is to fall (**Matthew 26:69-75**). Peter must continually remind each one **as long as I am in this tabernacle**—while I live in this

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temporary body. **Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle**—die. How did he know? **Our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.** But Peter's purpose of teaching God's Word reached beyond his death. **I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things**—teachings, truths—**always in remembrance.** He preserved them in writing. No doubt, copies were made to keep in several safe places. Now over nineteen hundred years later we have Peter's letters. Other writers carried out God's plan to hand down their letters for our spiritual nutrition.

The Cost of Bringing the Bible to Us

Jerome spent twenty-one years in a monastery at Bethlehem translating a Greek Old Testament and an Old Latin New Testament to make the Latin Vulgate Bible. Some copies were brought to England for use of church leaders. The Christian king, Alfred the Great, who ruled from 871 to 901, encouraged righteousness and began his list of laws with the Ten Commandments and other Bible selections. After a long time, John Wycliffe translated the Bible from the Vulgate into Middle English, finishing in 1382. A group of men called Lollards (poor priests) copied Wycliffe's Bible and walked about England reading it to the people and teaching them to obey it.

After printing was invented, William Tyndale went to Germany to be free to translate and print the Bible. His first New Testaments, printed in English, reached England by smuggling in bags of grain and bolts of cloth in 1526. When strangled and burned in 1536, his last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." Three years later King Henry VIII ordered that English Bibles be used in churches. Seventy years later King James I ordered that a new translation be made. It was finished in 1611 and is the King James Version in use today in England, America, and elsewhere. Copies were placed in church buildings, sometimes chained to a desk where people came to read.

For translating the Bible, Wycliffe was arrested. His Bible was forbidden to the people. Church leaders severely punished them for owning, reading, memorizing, or teaching the Bible in English. Some paid the equivalent of \$400 for a copy of it or a load of hay for a few chapters or for the privilege of reading it for a day. Years after his death, Wycliffe's body was dug up, burned, and the ashes strewed on the River Swift. Think of the long days and years spent in copying each Bible by hand, of the weary miles walked by the Lollards, and of the courage required of many to keep on in spite of persecution. A whole printing of Tyndale's Bible was publicly burned by order of the Bishop of London. Tyndale was put to death when only 44. This is but a small part of the cost of bringing the Bible to us. Yet it lies on the shelf in many homes, dusty and unread. Are we using it and obeying it as God intended? What of the future? Will it ever be a crime here to own and use a Bible?

JUST A THOUGHT

**When we do what we can do, God
will do what we cannot do.**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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